



David Fate Norton, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*
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Book Reviews

DAVID FATE NORTON, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. xiii + 400. \$59.95, cloth; \$17.95, paper.

This excellent anthology, which has already emerged as an oft-cited source in Hume scholarship, is a first rate collection of essays. With certainty that the community of Hume scholars are already engaged in discussion of the particular points of the individual essays, this review provides an overview of the collection and its value for a broad audience. *The Cambridge Companion to Hume* will prove useful not only for Hume scholars, but also for undergraduate and graduate students of Hume. For example, the volume would work well in a seminar, paired (of course) with Hume's own writings.

It is no surprise that *The Cambridge Companion* provides good company: it is comprised of ten essays by a distinguished and familiar group of Hume scholars, writing on various aspects of Hume's thought. In addition, the volume includes an introduction to Hume's thought by Norton and an appendix on Hume's autobiographies. (Yes, "autobiographies" plural; Norton elevates the 1734 letter to a physician to the status of autobiography entitled "A Kind of History of My Life.")

The authors of the essays are: John Biro, on Hume's new science of the mind; Alexander Rosenberg, on Hume and the philosophy of science; Robert Fogelin, on Hume's skepticism; Terence Penelhum, on Hume's moral psychology; Norton, on Hume, human nature, and the foundations of morality;

Knud Haakonssen, on the structure of Hume's political theory; Andrew Skinner, on Hume's principles of political economy; Peter Jones, on Hume's literary and aesthetic theory; David Wooton, on Hume 'the historian'; and J.C.A. Gaskin, on Hume on religion.

Most of the interpretations developed in the essays are in the mainstream of Hume scholarship; there is nothing overtly radical and revolutionary. (Some of the most recent interpretations of Hume go unnoticed: those of Annette Baier, David Pears, Simon Blackburn, A.E. Pitson, Barry Stroud, Walter Brand, and D.E. Flage, to name the most obvious.) The portraits of Hume contained within *The Cambridge Companion* are of Hume as: "the first post-sceptical philosopher" (Norton); "a neo-Hellenistic thinker" and as "a Socratic thinker" (Penelhum); "a scientist—an 'anatomist'—of the mind, of human nature" (Biro); an anticipator of "a version of 'hypothetico-deductivism'" (Rosenberg) and of "developments in twentieth-century linguistic philosophy" (Fogelin); and "a thinker of mixed political principles as pioneer in the empirico-historical study of politics" (Haakonssen). Skinner also emphasizes the historical method in economic theory.

Wooton, who views Hume as a "pro-Harringtonian," demonstrates that Hume virtually introduced the idea of rewriting history and broadened its readership to women. (If there is an essay which really breaks new ground, this is it.) Jones shows us that although "no explicit theories of beauty, art, or criticism are to be found in his [Hume's] works, by bringing together his scattered remarks on these subjects, and by looking at his general aims and the context in which he wrote, we can identify his principal views on these topics." Gaskin argues (rightly, I think) that fideistic Christianity cannot find any support in Hume's writings and that it is "a conception alien both to Hume's mitigated skepticism and to his worldly morality."

Most of the authors develop the historical background of Hume's ideas. Those who look backwards with Hume as anticipator are Biro, Rosenberg, and Fogelin. Biro's argument is particularly interesting; he finds affinities between Hume's science of mind and "so-called naturalizing programs common in recent philosophy of mind and epistemology." Many of us anticipated this connection when we read Quine's 1946 Hume lectures which were reproduced recently in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*.

There is an interesting point of contrast between Norton and Penelhum on Hume's conception of human nature, in particular, the difference between the ways they handle natural virtues. For Norton, natural virtues "are embedded as fundamental propensities of human nature itself. The evidence suggests that every human being, from the most primitive times to the present, has been motivated by these inherent virtues." For Penelhum, natural virtues evolve; he speaks of our nature as "creative," by which he means that Hume's "view of our beliefs is essentially a Darwinian view." *The History of England's* portrayal of human nature sides more with Penelhum on this issue

because Hume thought that the remote past is not worth studying due to the fact that the actions of primitive people lacked moral causes, while civilized people's actions could be explained by their moral causes. Hence, the *History* complicates this kind of discussion and sheds another light on the issue.

The Cambridge Companion to Hume is a rich offering of Hume scholarship and mainstream interpretation, which will no doubt stimulate significant discussion within *Hume Studies*, among other forums. I am sure that its voices will be heard within Hume scholarship and related areas of study for years to come.

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